



Montgomery County Department of Correction and Rehabilitation, Pre-Release and Reentry Services

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Submitted on: Wed. Ap

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Program Information

Program Name: Pre-Release and Reentry
Program Start Date : 06/01/1969
Jurisdiction Type: County
Jurisdiction Name: Montgomery County, M
Jurisdiction Unit: Department of Correctio Rehabilitation
Jurisdiction Population: 950000
Website: n/a
Applied Previously: No
Eval Team: Criminal Justice and Public Saf

Essays:

1. Please provide a two sentence summary of the innovation. This description should accurately and succinctly convey the essence of the innovation. (maximum 50 words.)

This county-funded community correctional residential reentry program effectively transitions soon-to-be released individuals leaving confinement from jail and state and federal prisons who are returning home. Individuals leave the program with employment, treatment, and family support, and the program saves taxpayer money, reduces institutional crowding, and reduces recidivism and victimization rates.

2. Please tell the story of your innovation,

- o **including the circumstances leading to its conception (such as previous efforts to deal with a particular problem),**
- o **the initiation of your program (for example how it was designed and launched), and**
- o **the program's ongoing operations and achievements (for example how it has been modified in response to obstacles or opposition).**
- o **Dates would be helpful in anchoring the narrative.**

(maximum 400 words.)

In 1972, the Montgomery County Department of Correction and Rehabilitation was chartered as an executive agency "to implement the modern concepts of community-based corrections" in order to reduce jail overcrowding and to "materially assist the offender" from the local jail and state and federal prisons "...adjust gradually to the community." The new Department quickly expanded its work release program -- now called Pre-Release and Reentry Services (PRRS) -- that had begun as a 16-bed pod within the jail.

In 1978, PRRS opened a new Pre-Release Center that has been twice expanded and that can currently hold 177 male and female program participants. In the 1990s, PRRS also developed a program that allows up to 45 carefully selected individuals live in their pre-approved homes.

For nearly four decades, PRRS has provided residential and non-residential reentry services to over 15,700 convicted and sentenced individuals who are within 12 months of release and who have been incarcerated in the county's jail system. Additionally the Division has been contracted by the state and federal prisons systems to serve prisoners in state and federal custody who are within six months of release and who are returning to Montgomery County and the Greater Washington Metropolitan area.

The program carefully screens and accepts only those individuals that it assesses can be safely managed in a community setting although it does not exclude violent and sex offenders. Relying on a considerable body of research that demonstrates the cost-benefit advantages of releasing incarcerated individuals through a highly-structured community-based program, it improves public safety by reducing recidivism and victimization rates and provides substantial taxpayer benefits.

The program has received national and even international recognition for the quality of its services and the robustness of its policies and procedures. It requires program participants to work, pay room and board, file state and federal taxes, and address restitution and child support obligations. Each client works with several staff members including a case manager to develop an individualized reentry plan that addresses their specific transitional needs including employment, housing, treatment, family and medical services. Additionally, the program holds clients accountable for their location at all times and to remain drug and alcohol free.

Annually, the program serves over 700 clients and has an 85% successful completion rate. Collectively, the program participants earn nearly \$2 million and pay over \$330,000 in taxes, \$300,000 in program fees, and \$200,000 in family support and restitution obligations.

3. The Innovations Awards four selection criteria are:

i) novelty, the degree to which the program or initiative demonstrates a leap in creativity

ii) effectiveness, the degree to which the program or initiative has achieved tangible results

iii) significance, the degree to which the program or initiative addresses an important problem of widespread public concern

iv) transferability, the degree to which the program or initiative, or aspects of it, has been successfully transferred to other government entities or shows promise of being successfully transferred.

Please show how your program meets each of these criteria.

(maximum 500 words.)

Novelty/Creativity

Few of the country's 3,000 jails run or utilize residential reentry centers, and PRRS is regarded as the nation's strongest. Its "work first" philosophy, its inclusion of family members in the reentry process, and its willingness to work with individuals who have committed serious offenses distinguish it programmaticallly. Uniquely, PRRS was designed to provide services to individuals leaving the local jail, state prison, and federal prison. While these individuals return at different

times from different institutions, they present similar public safety risks and have common transitional needs. PRRS serves as the nexus for social services including housing, substance abuse, and mental health treatment, and serves as a coordinating mechanism with corrections, probation and parole, and local law enforcement to ensure that those returning are monitored carefully and appropriately.

Effectiveness

PRRS enjoys great support and is fully integrated with the local criminal justice system. At any point in time, PRRS manages nearly 30% of its sentenced inmate population in a community setting, and its jails remains under-crowded. By comparison, the federal system and many state systems struggle to place 5% of their populations similarly. Research amply demonstrates the ability of these programs to reduce recidivism and improve institutional operations.

In 2008, the program saved over 61,700 jail bed days, and received nearly \$1.4 million in revenue through its federal and state contracts. Additionally, its client population earned \$1.9 million of which \$332,000 were paid as taxes, \$309,000 in program fees, \$194,000 in family support, and \$10,000 in restitution. Concerning recidivism, the Department completed a comprehensive baseline recidivism study in 2010.

Significance

Many states are facing rising and ruinous correctional budgets and dangerous and overcrowded correctional institutions in the face of declining revenues, and are desperate to reduce correctional populations safely and cost effectively. Over the past decade, organizations such as the Pew Foundation and the Urban Institute have documented the huge social costs within our society and particularly within disadvantaged communities of color of the quintupling of the incarceration rate since 1980, and the huge numbers of individuals leaving jails (13 million) and state and federal prisons (700,000) annually.

In the face of these challenges, the federal government and states have begun reexamining all types of criminal justice practices, and PRRS is a model that has great applicability to reshape correctional systems.

Transferability

PRRS has been visited by hundreds of correctional agencies across the country since its founding, and a smaller version was replicated in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina in the 1990s. The detailed elements of the program design are well developed and available including the building design, policies and procedures, and job descriptions.

Since 1999, Prisoner Reentry has remained on the national agenda, and a sea change has occurred in corrections where administrators have begun to understand that their agency mission must include preparing their population for release. As such, there has been renewed interest in the PRRS model. Further, three pieces of federal legislation promise funds and technical support for jurisdictions interested in develop a PRRS model program.